



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to ODIHR Director Ambassador Janez Lenarčič

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 17, 2011

Ambassador Lenarčič, we welcome you once again to the Permanent Council and to thank you for your comprehensive report and statement. The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned its place as the key institution in the OSCE's efforts to promote democratic development and, of course, to assist participating States in meeting their human dimension commitments. Better implementation of these commitments is imperative for us all, and we welcome your constructive role in this regard.

ODIHR's well-deserved reputation for election monitoring is directly attributable to its well-known, objective criteria and procedures for election observation. We look forward to continued cooperation between ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in carrying out future OSCE election observation missions. Both ODIHR and the PA are valuable contributors to the observation and evaluation processes. We encourage all participating States to work with your Office on follow-up to election observation activities. The United States welcomes follow-up activities with regard to the assessment of our mid-term elections last November.

Regarding independence of the judiciary and trial monitoring, we welcome the ODIHR mission to Belarus and continue to urge the Belarusian authorities to ensure ODIHR's adequate access to the persons and relevant information necessary in order to prepare a comprehensive report of its findings. In response to the statement on Guantanamo made by the representative of Belarus during last week's Permanent Council meeting, in which it was suggested that the U.S. invite the ODIHR to monitor proceedings involving Guantanamo prisoners, we would like to point out that proceedings involving the prosecution of Guantanamo detainees in both military commissions and U.S. courts are open to the public and to the press. ODIHR would be welcome to observe such proceedings alongside the international organizations and NGOs that are already in attendance. We take our OSCE commitments seriously and welcome such queries from other participating States in that regard.

We believe that the role of civil society in promoting human dimension goals is invaluable. We will continue to support full participation by NGOs at Human Dimension events in accordance with OSCE modalities, commitments and precedents and for full respect in all participating States for the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly that undergird civil society's important work.

The United States strongly supports ODIHR's efforts in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We particularly applaud your programs to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians, and members of other

religions, and the many other forms of intolerance and discrimination. We will once again have a full agenda in this important area this year.

We appreciate your remarks about the important work being done by ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues and, with regret, we share your candid assessment of the likelihood of little progress in the new status report due out next year. There have been two Ministerial Decisions in the last three years on improving early childhood education for Roma, but little has been done. On the important issues your report highlights, we would like to see ODIHR and the OSCE's Contact Point be more active and more vocal in publicly addressing them.

We particularly welcome your comments regarding our Mediterranean Partners. We agree that all people are ready for freedom – there is no trade-off between liberty and stability. We also agree that the OSCE – particularly ODIHR – has the tools and valuable experience to play a role in helping our partners upon their request towards democratic transition.

In conclusion, rest assured that the United States retains full confidence in the vital work performed by ODIHR and continues to support unequivocally its current leadership and direction. In that regard, we once again urge participating States that have not yet joined consensus regarding your extension in office to do so promptly so the work of your Office in assisting participating States to uphold their shared human dimension commitments can continue unabated.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.